

Asked if that meant that the United States would not necessarily withdraw all combat troops by 2014, Mr. Crocker said, "I don't know what we're going to be doing in 2014."

Caitlin Hayden, a spokeswoman for the National Security Council, said that "the president will make decisions on the size and shape of our presence after 2014 at the appropriate time, based on our interests and in consultation with our Afghan and NATO partners."

"We have been clear that any post-2014 presence by the U.S. would be at the invitation of the Afghan government and aimed at ensuring that we are able to target terrorists and support a sovereign Afghan government so that our enemies can't outlast us," she added. "We have also been very clear that we do not seek permanent bases in Afghanistan or a long-term military presence that would be a threat to Afghanistan's neighbors."

Military leaders have been quietly pushing to keep as many troops in the country as they can during the next two years as a safeguard while responsibility is transferred to Afghan forces.

On Wednesday, The Wall Street Journal reported that Gen. John R. Allen, the United States and NATO commander in Afghanistan, had been promoting the view that the withdrawals should stop after next year, with the remaining 68,000 soldiers to be kept in Afghanistan through 2013, before cuts resume in 2014. The article said he had not formally recommended that course of action, however.

Mr. Crocker noted that General Allen had made it clear that trainers and advisers would be likely to remain after 2014. Mr. Crocker said that in some cases "major weapons systems will not reach Afghanistan" until after 2014, so Afghans will need assistance learning how to operate and maintain them.

He said he did not expect America's diplomatic presence to be reduced along with the military pullback. The number of civilian American government employees in Afghanistan increased more than threefold from 2009 to 2011, to more than 1,130, from 320.

"The decisions get made in Washington, but it's my intention that we're going to stay pretty steady," he said. "As the military does draw down, I think our role will even increase in importance."

[From the New York Times, Dec. 11, 2011]

KARZAI SAYS FOREIGNERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR CORRUPTION

(By Alissa J. Rubin)

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN.—President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan blamed foreigners on Sunday for the corruption of Afghan officials and demanded that the United States extradite the former chief of the Afghan Central Bank in connection with the collapse of Kabul Bank, the country's largest financial institution.

The former governor of the Central Bank, Qadir Fitrat, is living in Virginia. He fled Afghanistan, saying he feared for his life after he was involved in making public the massive fraud at Kabul Bank and removing its senior management.

Neither of the top bank officers nor any of the major shareholders, who include a brother of Mr. Karzai's and a brother of the first vice president, Marshal Fahim, have been prosecuted, although all of them are still in Afghanistan.

Referring to Mr. Fitrat, Mr. Karzai said, "The government of the United States should cooperate and hand him over to us."

"Bring Fitrat and hand him over to Afghanistan to make clear who is to blame," he said. "But our hand can't reach to America."

Mr. Karzai made the remarks at an event sponsored by the United Nations to mark International Anti-Corruption Day. Afghanistan is one of the world's most corrupt countries, tying for second worst in rankings by Transparency International, which tracks perceptions of global corruption.

Several Western diplomats and officials working with the Afghan government said they were disappointed by Mr. Karzai's speech, in which he appeared to again shift much of the blame for corruption to foreigners. While foreigners are unquestionably involved in some of the corruption, they shared responsibility with the Afghans and were only peripherally involved in the Kabul Bank debacle.

Mr. Karzai also asked that foreigners who give aid to the country tell Afghan officials if government officials or their relatives ask for bribes. Foreign governments have helped finance anticorruption efforts, but the Afghans have often squashed high-profile corruption prosecutions of senior officials. That has been a continuing effort by NATO to comb through military contracts with Afghan businesses to detect corruption and terminate contracts in which there has been manifest abuse. That effort has gone on largely behind the scenes, so it is difficult to tell if it has had much success.

Ryan C. Crocker, the American ambassador, said he believed that corruption was now being taken more seriously, although progress was slow and none of the main people responsible for the Kabul Bank fraud had been prosecuted. The Afghan government lost more than \$850 million in the bank's collapse. While some of that money has been recovered—more than expected, according to several officials—the government will probably have to pay \$450 million to \$500 million to cover losses.

"I am told they have a series of indictments that have been kept in the pending file as they concentrate on asset recovery," Mr. Crocker told reporters on Saturday. "Look, it's hardly a perfect world. And it isn't going to be for quite some time. What I look for is a trajectory: Is the line going up or down? Very cautiously and very incrementally, I see it going up. In other words, corruption is being taken more seriously at higher levels."

"Does that mean we've turned the corner? We'll see," he added.

Mr. Karzai's focus on Mr. Fitrat and his jab at the United States are the latest in a series of similar comments he has made about the fraud at Kabul Bank. In an interview with the German magazine *Der Spiegel* last week, he also blamed the United States for Kabul Bank's troubles, saying, "The Americans never told us about this."

"We believed a certain embassy was trying to create financial trouble for us," he said. "We felt the whole bank scam was created by foreign hands." Mr. Karzai declined to be specific, but the American Embassy is the only one that has deeply consulted with the Afghan banking system.

CONGRATULATING ROBERT GRIFFIN, III

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FLORES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FLORES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a constituent of Texas District 17. His name is Robert Griffin, III, of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and he is the recipient of the 2011 Heisman Memorial Trophy.

The son of two U.S. Army sergeants, RG3, as he is more popularly known,

epitomizes what it means to be a student athlete and a role model for all Americans.

During the Baylor Bears' 2011 season, Robert threw for nearly 4,000 yards and had 45 touchdowns. His 72 percent completion rate placed him among the most accurate passers in the Nation, and he was the only player in the country who had at least 3,300 passing yards and 300 rushing yards.

□ 1030

He is one of only three players in Football Bowl Subdivision history with 10,000 career passing yards and 2,000 career rushing yards. He owns or shares 30 Baylor football records.

Among his awards and accolades in 2011 were the Chic Harley Award for the National Player of the Year, the Big 12 Player of the Year, first team All-American, the Davey O'Brien Award, and, of course, the 77th annual Heisman Memorial Trophy, awarded to the most outstanding player in college football each year. He did all of this while leading the Bears to their first nine-win regular season since 1986 and a berth in the Alamo Bowl in 2011.

What makes Robert such an excellent role model is that his success at Baylor has not only been on the field. Robert graduated from Baylor in 3 years with a 3.67 GPA and a degree in political science. He is currently in graduate school pursuing a master's in communication and plans to attend law school in the future. He is a six-time member of the Big 12 Commissioner's Honor Roll and a two-time Dean's List honoree. This year, he was named second team Academic All-American.

Robert is also very active in his community, regularly volunteering for several charities in the Waco area. Robert is also a world-class hurdler, and he hopes to qualify for the 2012 Olympic Team. I am personally proud of RG III because he is a fine Christian man and publicly professes his faith in God.

I also want to congratulate Baylor University and football coach Art Briles on a great 2011 football season. As Coach Briles says, "great things come with great effort," and the Baylor Nation should be justifiably proud of their football team and coaching staff for their great effort this year.

Before I close, I would like to wish all Americans a safe and fulfilling Christmas season and holiday season. I ask that all of us continue to pray for our country and our military men and women during these difficult times.

Sic 'em, Bears.

THE OBLIGATION OF EVERY CITIZEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, as we move toward the close of this congressional session, I have been embarrassed at the number of people that have recognized me and ask, What's wrong with

the government? What's wrong with the Congress? Why can't you people get along? And it's very difficult and embarrassing to tell them that you really need all parts of the government working together, pushing the boat forward and rowing in the same direction. And when you have somebody that's already said that their primary mission as Members of the United States Congress is to get rid of the President, how that is interpreted legislatively is it means that the President cannot offer them anything that would look like he's accomplishing something positive because it would interfere with their primary goal, which is not economic growth, not jobs and not helping people out when they need a hand up, but it has to show that we want to get rid of Obama. And you can see that even the candidates that want to fill his job, they're not talking about what they're going to do, but the whole campaign is against the President.

Now, some people believe, as those on television, that for all practical purposes we should not expect that we'll be able to give assistance to our various communities throughout the country because the campaign has started, and so therefore no legislation is going to pass. That's just not so, and you don't have to wait until an election.

We haven't been sent down here just to please our voters for what happens in 2012. Each and every day, you have a right—and an obligation—to call the person that you have sent down here to Washington. And if you haven't, someone did. Everybody has a Member of this House and two Members in the other body. Why can't you pick up the phone to tell them that what they do in this year before the holidays and what they don't do is going to make a big difference in terms of how you vote when that opportunity comes? So you can put the pressure on.

And I might add this too. It is not just the voters that have this obligation to help those that are lesser among us, it's not those that are waiting for a little help, but the Republicans say that the only way you get the help is to cut back in health care, is to support the Keystone oil pipeline. All of these things, people don't go to sleep at night wondering about a pipeline. They want to know are they going to get any help from their government. And the issues really don't affect the very, very rich. They affect the very, very poor and those in the middle class that are being pushed into poverty where one out of five kids in the United States of America is born into poverty.

I am suggesting that this is not just a plea for economic justice or equity in how we tax people, but it is a moral issue that we should be hearing from our clergy. I'm not talking about Democrats and Republicans. I'm talking about Matthew, where Jesus said it's how you treat the lesser among us as to how you're going to be judged. And it's not just the Bible. It's not just

the Old and New Testament. It's the Koran. It's the Torah. It's Muslims. It's Mormons. It's Christians and it's Jews. It's there. And it would seem to me if our clergy missed this wonderful opportunity before the Holy Spirit, not to tell us what to do but to tell us what they think is the right thing that we should be doing.

And so, as we move into the holidays, please don't think that we've got the other side convinced that they should give relief for unemployed people who paid into a system and who lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Please don't think that they want to protect Social Security and that they want to protect Medicaid and Medicare. No. That's our job to do it. But it's your job to remind us that we have this obligation to do it.

And so you're right if you stop us in the street and say that we've lost credibility—all of government, the President, the candidates for President, the Democrats and the Republicans. But what about you? Will you be able to say that you joined in this effort? Will you be able to say you made that telephone call or visited that office? I hope you do. And you can count on many of us that are waiting for that type of support. We need it.

Thank you. God bless America.

HOUSE HOLIDAY HUMBUGS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Maryland (Ms. EDWARDS) for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, as families prepare for the holidays, many will gather to watch some of our favorite holiday movies. In my family, we always enjoyed watching "How the Grinch Stole Christmas," tuning into "A Christmas Carol," and one of my favorites, "It's a Wonderful Life."

Well, Mr. Speaker, it won't be necessary to visit the local Redbox or scour the TV Guide listings or order the movies on Netflix. Americans across this country can tune in to C-SPAN and watch our own version of the Grinch and Ebenezer Scrooge and Henry Potter, our House holiday humbugs right here on the floor of the House of Representatives.

The American people can only hope, however, that they can redeem themselves, our holiday humbugs, the way these characters did. But I fear that's not possible.

Yesterday, House Republicans brought to the floor a payroll tax credit and an unemployment insurance proposal trimmed in controversial riders and deceit. The holiday humbugs, the GOP leadership, decorated the payroll tax credit and unemployment insurance bill with a controversial Keystone pipeline rider to sweeten the deal for their caucus. But that wasn't enough. The majority gilded the proposal with cuts to essential health care reform funding, a freeze in Federal employee pay for yet another year, and a cut in the length of emergency unemploy-

ment insurance and blocking the administration from moving forward on environmental protections that will help our families breathe, drink, and live more healthfully.

Now, today, we heard from the House holiday humbugs that the big problem facing the unemployed that House Republicans tried to fix yesterday was drug testing for the unemployed.

□ 1040

Well, Mr. Speaker, the problem for the unemployed isn't drugs, it's a job. And in the absence of a job, it's an unemployment check.

So for the holidays, my Republican colleagues put on their list a proposal that would dip further into the pockets of low and middle-income families that buy health insurance in the new health exchanges. And during this holiday season, at a time in our Nation's economy when consumption has grown by only 5 percent since June 2009, our Holiday Humbug proposal by Republicans would cut holes in the pockets of millions of our Nation's consumers.

The legislation passed in the House yesterday would freeze the compensation of 2.65 million Federal employees all across this country, Federal employees who are consumers, Mr. Speaker. So while the special interests and the Wall Street fat cats and the big oil companies are enjoying their large Christmas bonuses, Federal employees who have already contributed \$60 million in forgone pay for deficit reduction will be required to give up even more.

The Republican plan hits struggling families even harder. In fact, the bill passed yesterday by our holiday humbugs eliminates 40 weeks of unemployment insurance. The funding for this program not only helps families check off items on their Christmas list—things like rent, things like childcare, and things like groceries—but the funding brings money back into the American economy. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that every dollar of benefits spent on unemployment compensation generates about \$2 of additional economic activity. That's money directly into our economy.

The Republican proposal passed in the House yesterday would eliminate over \$22 billion in economic growth and result in the loss of 140,000 jobs in 2012. That's what happened in this House yesterday. My colleague, SANDER LEVIN from Michigan, recognized that the legislative "holiday gift" that the Republicans thought they were providing the American worker this Christmas is just one big lump of coal. Their proposal would leave millions of Americans out in the cold this holiday season while imposing additional barriers to receiving assistance and diminishing the protections of unemployed workers.

Throughout the day yesterday the holiday humbugs kept trying to point to places where we could compromise.